

INTERVENTO PROGRAMMATO

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PLANNING FOR TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURES IN THE
AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
AND THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS:
THEIR RELATIONSHIPS
WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

It's my great pleasure to speak at this conference which has been perfectly organised by the Centre for Transport Studies of the University of Messina and its director professor Fanara, whom I want publicly to thank for the kind invitation to come to Sicily. My second starting point is related to the expectation that my English would be acceptable and understandable to most of the audience although for a couple of days with great interest I have been following here the debates in Italian.

As mentioned in the programme, I represent one of the countries of the Eastern Europe, the Republic of Belarus, known also as Russia Bianca or Bielorrussia. This may seem to be of little relevance to the South of Italy and to the development of that region. But if you take the analysis of the modern trends in the evolution of the economic ties and transport infrastructures it could make you think that there should be some relationship between the development of one region with the development of the other region. In this regard I would like to add one more point. This is the enlargement of the European Union which in the near future would consist of about 28 countries with the population of 500 million people and with the huge internal market. As a result of this process Belarus

would happen to be the closest neighbour of the European Union to the east, a sort of gateway from the Western and Central Europe to the Eastern Europe and further on to Asia.

I believe that with good deal of imagination, one could think about future potential cooperation for the investment into the transport infrastructures in Belarus in order to ensure the proper development of the Pan-European networks. My task for this presentation is a little bit facilitated because yesterday we listened to Mr. Raul de Luzenberger, who discussed with the audience the existing programmes of the European Union that would assist the Eastern European Countries in developing their transport infrastructures (with Belarus being one of them). But probably in this context Belarus should be put in the centre of attention because, as you know, this country is situated in the Central Eastern part of Europe. It borders with Russia on the East, Ukraine on the South, Poland on the West, as well as Lithuania and Latvia on the North. So historically this country has always been a cross road for commercial routes from Far East to Europe and from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. Therefore it was not by chance that these historic routes were taken into account and a special emphasis was put on Belarus when Pan-European corridors were planned in the beginning of 90-ies. Now two of them, corridor number 2 and corridor number 9 pass through Belarus. By the way, they account for about 10 per cent of the total length of the Pan-European corridors in general which is quite significant as far as the distance is concerned.

One of the corridors, I mean corridor number 2, is of primary importance not only for Belarus but practically for all the countries of the Western Europe and Russia, because it connects Paris, Berlin, Warsaw, Minsk and Moscow in the most convenient and shortest way. And even more important is the fact that the decision was taken to extend this corridor further on to the East to the Volga river with further connection to the Trans-Siberian route. When this project would be fully implemented I may imagine that it could be one of the most important innovations that relates to all kind of

commercial traffic between the Western Europe and various stocks in the Far East.

For the moment the length of this corridor in the Republic of Belarus is about six hundred kilometres. It should be stressed that it represents a very vivid practical example of how the European Union may make things look different and better. With the technical assistance of the EU Member-States and with the credit line from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the ordinary road in Belarus was turned into a modern highway, which corresponds to the European standards. Now it's the first toll road in the former USSR which demonstrates the way in which the European Union Transport Policies could facilitate the development of the infrastructures in the Eastern Europe.

Many things have been changed for the better during the reconstruction of the road. The conditions for the carriage of goods were significantly improved through the development of the road infrastructure – convenient parking lots, fuel stations, hotels, motels, recreation areas, etc. Still the general infrastructure of this corridor still leaves much to be desired. TACIS experts estimate that about 500 million euros of investments would be required in the near future to upgrade this road to the top European standards and I hope this could be the case for the successful development of corridor number 2. Of course, in addition to the road infrastructure, a railway infrastructure has been developed there. I would like to mention one more interesting project that is now being under consideration. It relates to the export of the electrical energy from Russia through Belarus to Poland and finally Germany, and from Germany to the South of Europe, perhaps Italy, and the South Eastern Europe. That is a very promising project although its implementation requires a lot of financial resources to modernise the existing electrical and energetic infrastructures, and to increase considerably the capacities of the equipment.

Now I want to say few words about corridor number 9. This route goes from the North to the South of Belarus and unites Helsinki on the top with San Petersburg in Russia, Vitebsk, Mogilev and Gomel - regional cities of Belarus with Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, and further on it turns to Kishinev in Moldova, Bucharest in Rumania, Sofia in Bulgaria, and ends up in the Greek city Alexandropolis. Indeed, it is a very long corridor with one additional branch in Belarus which connects this corridor with Minsk, Vilnius, Kaunas and the Baltic Sea port Klaipeda in Lithuania.

This corridor more or less follows the ancient route from Scandinavia to Greece, which was known from very old times. Its importance is difficult to overestimate. We believe that this is a condition *sine qua non* for the regional political, economic, social and cultural development. The total length of the corridor in Belarus is about 900 kilometres and much work should be done in order to upgrade it to modern standards and to provide comfortable facilities for international carriage.

At this point I should stress that these two corridors – number 9 and number 2 – from West to East and from North to South – were already included into the Pan-European strategy. Therefore, they would be developed sooner or later, and there is no need to find additional arguments for such a prospect. But with this audience here I want to make one more point that could be of particular relevance for bilateral relations between Italy and Belarus. It relates to one more pan-European corridor, number 5, which starts from the Italian port of Trieste and then goes through Lubljana in Slovenia and Budapest in Hungary to Uzhgorod and Lvov in Ukraine. The development of this route is greatly supported by the Central European Initiative (this is a regional organisation where Italy plays a leading role and Belarus happens to be a member as well). With due regard to the geographical position of the countries and the existing corridors number 9 and number 2, it looks for us prudent to put forward a proposal to extend corridor number 5 from Lvov in Ukraine to Minsk in Belarus. This would permit to connect

all three corridors 2, 9 and 5 and provide the easiest and the most convenient route for the carriage of goods between Italy, South-Eastern Europe and Russia.

To my mind, there is a big deal of potential that could be used to support the extension of this corridor. In practical terms, and we have already done some analysis, it means that only 300 kilometres of the road should be upgraded and the investments would take about 50 million euros. As for the railway, it is already in place and there is no need for serious investments. We are deeply convinced that such an extension could greatly facilitate a great deal at the economic dice and the development of commercial practice between Southern European countries, Italy in particular, and Belarus and of course Russia. What we are lacking here is the political decision of the participating countries, Italy included, and, of course, the European Commission, and we hope that for this decision to be taken additional arguments would be found. I am confident that such an approach would provide the basis for further co-operation between our regions, and perhaps, with this optimistic note I would conclude my brief presentation and thank you for the attention.

GIOVANNI PARILLO

(c.s.)

Ringrazio il prof. Astapenka per la preziosa testimonianza, che contribuisce ad arricchire le nostre conoscenze sui Paesi dell'Est Europa.

Finiamo qui questa sessione rispettando il programma. Ricordo che la sessione conclusiva dei lavori sarà presieduta dall'ammiraglio Ferraro che, fino a poco tempo fa, ha diretto il complesso delle Capitanerie di Porto italiane.

Grazie.

